



K O I N Ō N I A

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Communication and situation of the SFO in the world:

Emerging National Fraternities

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Introduction

The modern media of social communications offer humans of today a great round table. At this, they are in search of and are able to participate in a worldwide exchange of brotherhood and co-operation. It is not surprising that this should be so, for the media are at the disposal of all and are channels for that very dialogue which they themselves stimulate. The torrents of information and opinions pouring through these channels make every man a partner in the business of the human race. This interchange creates the proper conditions for that mutual and sympathetic understanding which leads to universal progress.

A mass of information is continually on the move to and from all parts of the world, and as a result, we learn what goes on and how others live. The media plays their part in eliminating illiteracy and in providing both basic and further education. They enrich human minds. They help them to keep in touch with reality by providing the sights and sounds, which are the very stuff of life. They bring faraway times and places within their grasp.

Modern humans cannot do without information that is full, consistent, accurate and true. Without it one cannot understand the perpetually changing world in which one lives, nor is able to adapt oneself to the real situation. This adaptation calls for frequent decisions that should be made with a full knowledge of events. Only in this way, can one assume a responsible and active role in the community and be a part of its economic, political, cultural and religious life.

II. Situation of the SFO

The SFO is present in 110 countries in the world. There are 65 constituted National Fraternities, 42 National Emerging Fraternities and 3 other nations that are developing a Secular Franciscan presence. The numeric consistency of the SFO stays at around 400,000 professed active members but this cannot be established as accurate because of old age, death and lack of communications. The Franciscan Youth is present in 64 countries with 30 recognized national fraternities and 34 emerging national fraternities.

Today we are able to observe a reduction and aging of the SFO in the so-called “Western world”. For many people in the first world the priority seems to be possessions (Consumption), comfort and hedonism and not the “being” and spiritual values. This phenomenon provokes tiredness and discouragement in the National Councils, which do not know how to face what seems to be a charismatic and spiritual crisis.

But the SFO lives with great progress and joy, a solid and sustained growth in Asia, Africa, Slavic countries and Eastern Europe. It is clear that the situations are very diverse in these areas. In Africa, we find the most noteworthy and fast growing development, but the formation of brothers and sisters has to be taken care of in depth, particularly in some National, emerging and established fraternities where it is deficient. We have to call our attention to the development of the Order and of the Franciscan Youth in Asian countries, especially in Southeast Asia and in the Middle East where Christianity is a small minority.

The General Chapter of SFO in Hungary, November 15-22, 2008 chose 5 important priorities for its growth. They are:

1. Formation
2. Communication
3. Franciscan Youth
4. Presence in the World
5. Emerging Fraternities

If all these commissions need to work efficiently then they need information, or the search for news and its publication. Due to the progress of modern society and the increasing interdependence of its members on one another, it is obvious that information is very useful and, for the most part, essential. If news or facts and happenings are communicated often and without delay, every individual will have permanent access to sufficient information and thus will be enabled to contribute effectively to the common good. Further, all of them will more easily be able to contribute in unison to the prosperity and progress of the Order as a whole.

III. Communication

Sharing of information is the key to progress. The lived experiences of Secular Franciscans in the world need to be shared, not only with the International Presidency but also between National Fraternities, particularly those of similar language and geographical areas. Enhancing the circulation of information can stimulate other fraternities to engage in similar initiatives that provide a Franciscan testimony in the world.

Communication is something everyone engages in, some with more skill than others. In much of our communication, the focus is on the content of conversations. We listen to what people are saying to us and attempt to respond. More often, we listen only slightly to what the other person is saying while we are thinking of a response. Conversations may become a series of two monologues. Communication is usually more rich, varied and subtle than we realize. Communication is a two-way street involving both receiving messages and giving messages, and a two-way method utilizing both spoken words and nonverbal messages. Communication and dialogue are important and effective means by which we can maintain good inter human relationships. Communication is based on the mutual exchange of thoughts, feelings which take place in individual persons and is shared with others. Usually the person who communicates gives something to the other one and accepts the opinion of the other person and thus a dialogue is formed. Problematic relationships between people come from bad communication. Therefore, we have to accept the good communication and improve the quality of life in the fraternity. Communication is understood on the basis of mutual relationship.

The communication process takes four steps to be complete.

1. A message is sent: Someone shares an idea or a feeling with another person.
2. A message is received: The other person gives a feedback, through words or signs, to indicate that a message has been received.
3. The sender receives feedback: The response of the receiver tells the sender if the message was understood.
4. Another message is sent: If the first message was not understood, the sender tries other ways to express the same idea or feeling. If the first message was understood, another message can be sent and communication can proceed.

To be complete, a message must be given and received with a common understanding of what the message means. The sender is responsible for being sure his message is accurately received, for finding a way to express himself so that the receiver knows what the message means.

The Secular Franciscans at all levels require information and communications if it is to choose the right course. The Fraternities require well-informed members and leaders. The right to information and communication is not merely the prerogative of the individual, it is essential to the Order's interest. In our Local, Regional, National Fraternities dialogue is polite mutual sharing of the thoughts and the basis is the listening, attention and empathy. Many times the discussion in the communities is an attempt to persuade the other about the truth. There is a lack of dialogue in fraternities. When there is no dialogue in the fraternities, the persons are insulted, humiliated and disrespected. Listening does not mean to agree. Dialogue is the base, breath of fraternal life. On the local level, the council consists of five elected members: the minister, the vice minister, secretary, treasurer and formator. There must be understanding between them and other members of the fraternity. The fraternity is a place of growth; it is also a place where misunderstandings can occur. The council is responsible for listening to and discerning difficulties experienced by any member of the fraternity. All persons should feel free and comfortable to discuss their problems with any member of the council. The council should offer a ready and willing forum to listen to all sides of a situation, impartially.

It is the responsibility of the local councils to establish frequent fraternal gatherings. Members must remember that they come together as fraternity to be nourished and strengthened to go back to the world with the gifts they have received from being together. If the allotted time does not allow for this growth, they might want to think about extending it. Ongoing formation can also be enhanced by sharing materials and ideas with other fraternities.

On a regional level, times of retreat, formation, evangelical living and socialization are to be established at least annually. These are times when members of different fraternities can share their accomplishments with each other. Sharing this information at a regional gathering might give another fraternity the opportunity it is seeking to get involved. The gathering would be an opportune place for members to meet in small groups and discuss difficulties. What seems a problem to one fraternity may have already found a solution in another. Sharing of these resources is an excellent way of growing together.

Personal communication is the ability to share with another what one is. It is the ability to share with another my perception of who they are. It is a chance to share emotions, information, feelings, imagination, fears, and vulnerability. It is the heartbeat of a Franciscan fraternity. Without it, misunderstanding, frustration, misinterpretation and similar feelings will abound.

The common experience we find in the fraternities and families taught me many things. One of them is that people presume that others are mind-readers. Children expect parents to know things even if they have not been told. Parents have expectations from children but may not have shared it to them what they are. Franciscans have complained about lack of fraternal support without ever communicating their need for support. People seem to think that others automatically, magically, intuitively know when one needs something. We are afraid that communicating may call us to a tough decision we want to avoid. Whatever the case, communication is important to our Franciscan way of life.

IV. Emerging National Fraternities

The presidency took very seriously the fact of rediscovering the lay Franciscan presence in several parts of the world. Now we have 42 emerging fraternities in the world. It is a real sign of new life to witness the emergence of fraternities in many nations throughout the world. Sustained by the First Order, Third Order Regular and the Secular Franciscan Order, these fraternities are providing a testimony to the Franciscan charism within their own nations and within the context of their particular cultures. Due to communication challenges, information on some of these emerging fraternities is still not available and, as a result, a complete picture of emerging fraternities is still outstanding.

The National Fraternities must place the maximum interest in this issue of vital significance for our Order and pay attention to the “situation” where they can find some emerging Fraternity to accompany it during its paths toward training, maturing and consolidation. It is very much needed today.

The accompanying Fraternity may offer its life experience and become enriched by the new sense of vitality that runs through our Order encouraged by youngsters, stimulating and enthusiastic realities. Emerging Fraternities may receive the support of National Fraternities, fidelity to vocation, the transmission of spirituality and the history of our Order, as well as the accompaniment, advice and they even need formation materials, which are not always available to them. The Role of international councillors lies in facilitating the collection of statistics for their national fraternities and for those fraternities, which they accompany. All emerging national fraternities should be accompanied by an established national fraternity. Currently 42 emerging national fraternities and 3 other nations are developing a Secular Franciscan presence. Of these 45 nations, 29 are being accompanied: 19 by national fraternities and 10 by the Presidency. Sixteen emerging national fraternities still require accompaniment.

It is our duty to comply with what our Rule requests of us and to be an enlightening sign for the entire Church and the society of the 21st century. The sense of belonging to the Order cannot be restricted to a vague sensation, but must be visibly manifested in concrete and effective behaviour. The sense of belonging calls for the love of the order, feeling it is my own family, feeling that all members are my brothers and sisters. The sense of belonging is frail, both with religious and secular. A necessary sign of conscientious participation in the resources and obligations of the Fraternities must also be an enhanced and responsible sensitivity towards the financial situation of the SFO family. Profession and Sense of Belonging are two fundamental intertwined elements to fulfil our mission, without which the Order does not and cannot exist.

In this context, we have several calls: call from society, call from church, call from our own order and call from existential situations etc....We need to read the signs of the times and the places. God speaks to us in time and place. The church invites us to commit ourselves fully. There may be lots of commitments, but there may not be much of the sense of belonging. Profession and sense of belonging cannot be separated. For this we must go back to the grass roots – to rediscover our roots. We must re-read and re-situate the charisma in the present moment so that the charisma becomes visible, meaningful and actual. If we do not do this, we may become an “archaeological element.”

We need to know our history. Without history there is no future. We need to listen to two realities: God and the World. Listening gives us a vision. The capacity of listening is to anticipate the future otherwise future will eat us up. We need great love for the people. Francis and Clare were passionate lovers. We must be hot not cold. We need faith and courage. We must allow ourselves to be seduced by the Holy Spirit. Heresy is not the threat but carrying on as we are is the real threat. May Jesus give us great opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit and specifically in our celebration of the Eucharist, in our dialogues, in our sharing, in our discussions, in our deliberations and in our relationships. It is the time of renewal and new life. Let us celebrate fraternity, celebrate life and come to know each other. Let us listen to one another and learn from one another. The spirit-power that transforms bread and wine is also present to transform us. The secular identity of the SFO is a fundamental point of our vocation and is manifested in the mission and testimony of each one of its members and fraternities. We are called to build a new, just and fraternal world, contributing to the Kingdom of God, with courageous initiatives and actions in the concrete situations we live in, never forgetting the importance of confident and persevering prayers.

The conversion and growth are aided by the continual process of being formed into the person God has called us to be. For us as Secular Franciscans, this call is to take the charism of our father Francis into the world in which we live. Our goal is to flow “...from gospel to life and life to the gospel”. In order for this process to be a complete immersion into Franciscanism, formation must involve all aspects of our being; it must be three-dimensional: **1. Informational; 2. Formational; and 3. Transformational.**

- 1. Informational:** In discerning our vocation, knowledge of the order will help insure that Francis is the proper guide on our path for spiritual growth. A careful reading of his life, both from the source materials and from modern biographies, will help us understand the charism we are being asked to take into the secular world. A reading of the life of St. Clare and the lives of the Third Order saints will help us see how others integrated this charism before us. Therefore, an understanding of our

history and what brought about these changes is beneficial. The only “Book” necessary for this journey is the Gospel. We cannot separate the Rule from the gospels because to live the Rule is to live the Gospel. “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to Gospel” (*Rule 4*).

2. **Formational:** If the Gospel is the book from which Franciscans are formed, and then the community, the local fraternity, is the fertile ground in which the seeds of this message are nurtured and grown. The local fraternity should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. It is within the local fraternity that the formational aspects of this process begin to take place. It is within the local fraternity that we are formed, moulded, and shaped into Secular Franciscans by the lives and example of those who surround us. It is within Fraternity that the entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living. We come to fraternity to share the joys and the trials of living our gospel-centred life. We come to fraternity to be nourished in our Franciscan vocation and to go forth from this graced encounter to be leaven in the world around us.
3. **Transformational:** This daily conversion is the transformational aspect of formation. Conversion is a gift and a grace, that it is personal and ongoing, and that it is the way to the Father. Where the members of Secular Franciscan Fraternities fully commit themselves individually and collectively by ongoing conversion in all areas of their lives, a blessing will be given to the church. So let us go forth to continue to love and serve the Lord and give flesh to the Gospel.

V. Conclusions

The SFO will be what the formation of its members is. Without suitable formation for the times and demands of the present day, there may be no future for the SFO because there is no present. It is not the numbers but the quality of the members that will sustain the SFO. We must form people, believers and Franciscans. We only have two types of formation – people in formation and people on the road to deformation. Formation must also be practical – must touch the whole person. Formation must change my life. What enters into the mind must flow through the heart. Formation must touch the heart. What I assimilated must be lived. We must wake up! The sense of belonging is frail, both with religious and with the seculars. Leaves will fall, and new leaves will grow. What is important is how the tree is fed. With respect to the sense of belonging, we must grow into belonging. Your mission is to construct the Secular Franciscan Order. With respect to Franciscan Youth, it must be noted that youth are not our future but youth are our present. An Order without youth is destined to die. There is a challenge to balance the old with young. The journey must be in two directions: the old towards the young and the young towards the old. These Young Franciscan brothers and sisters are a great gift of the Lord to our Order and to the entire Franciscan Family. They live their “call” in their own way and we are invited to welcome them generously, open-mindedly and open-heartedly, accompany them and help them with our testimony of reciprocal love and coherent Franciscan life.

I would like to conclude my article with a small story:

One evening a man took a small candle from a box and began to climb a long winding stairway.

“Where are we going?” asked the candle.

“We’re going up higher than the house to show ships the way to the harbour.

“But no ship in the harbour could ever see my light,” said the candle. “It is so very small.”

“If your light is small,” the man said, “just keep burning brightly and leave the rest to me.”

When they reached the top of the lighthouse, they came to a large lamp. Then he took the little candle and lit the lamp. Soon the great polished reflectors behind the lamp sent beams of light out across the miles of sea.

We are God’s lights! Our job is to keep on shining, and our effectiveness is in His hands. We are all like small candles: insignificant, weak and fragile but let us all burn simply. Let us burn with our Franciscan charism wherever we are. This is what God wants from us. As you go back to your fraternities, just burn, give this spirit of our Franciscan Charism to other members of your fraternity, and help them to burn. Take courage. The Secular Franciscan Order is a very important part of the Franciscan Family and in no way

second-class. Secular Franciscans can reach areas that religious are not able to reach. You are very much needed by the Franciscan family. The mission awaiting us is not easy, but I say to you firmly:

Fear not, because you also have found grace with God.

Fear not, because you are not alone, we are together on this journey.

Fear not, because the Lord is always with you.

NEWS - CHAPTERS - VISITS - MEETINGS

Egypt – Meeting with the OFM Provincial Ministers of Africa and Visit to SFO-GiFra. From 25 March to 4 April 2009 Fr. Ivan Matić, OFM, General Assistant of SFO-GiFra, was in Egypt to attend the meeting of the Conference of OFM Provincial Ministers of Africa, to present the current situation of the SFO and GiFra in that continent, with special attention to the emerging national fraternities. He meeting took place between 27 March - 1 April 2009 at the OFM house in Mokattam, Cairo, organized by the General Definitor for Africa, Fr. Amaral Bernard Amaral, OFM, and by the Provincial Minister of Egypt, Fr. Joseph Amin, OFM, currently President of the Conference. Fr. José R. Carballo, OFM, General Minister, was expected to be present at the end of the meeting, since he was due to begin a fraternal visitation from April 1-4 2009, to the Holy Family Province of Egypt, accompanied by Fr. Amrarral and Fr. Ivan.

During his stay in Egypt, Fr. Ivan met Fr. Adel Zaki, SFO National Assistant, as well as members of the SFO National Council, who gave him an update on the situation of the SFO in Egypt. Closer collaboration with the CISFO presidency was the theme of the fraternal discussions, as well as a number of meetings with various Friars, students, local Assistants and SFO Ministers, including a meeting with Fr. Nasser Basili, OFM, National Assistant for GiFra. Fr. Ivan also visited various local SFO fraternities and of GiFra in Cairo, Port Said and Alexandria. At present in Egypt, there are 15 canonically established local SFO Fraternities and 2 emerging Fraternities, with 247 members. In addition, there is a strong presence of Franciscan Youth (about 22 local Fraternities) and many groups of “Junior Heralds” and Heralds.

Colombia – Celebration of the VIII Centenary of the Franciscan Charism. The solemn celebration of the VIII Centenary of the Franciscan Charism by the Secular Franciscans and Young Franciscans of Colombia took place from 27th April to 1st May 2009, in three cities: Bogotá, Barranquilla and Medellín. Over 1500 people took part, Secular Franciscans, Young Franciscans and the spiritual assistants. Fr. Ivan Matić, OFM, General Assistant of SFO-GiFra, was present as a special guest and took the opportunity to meet many members of the SFO and GiFra in Colombia. Fr. Olivo Mora Contreras, OFM, National Assistant accompanied Fr Ivan for the SFO-GiFra in Colombia.

The celebrations were festive, fraternal, with a strong sense of communion, and sharing. The presence of the Provincial Ministers of the First Order was also much appreciated at the various celebrations. They, after all, were the ones who made the celebrations possible thanks to their support and material preparations. The whole Franciscan Family in that country followed the Celebration of the VIII Centenary of the Franciscan Charism in Colombia with great interest.

After the celebrations in Bogotá, Fr. Ivan also visited some local Fraternities of SFO-GiFra, as well as the communities of friars who serve them: the Fraternity of Concepción, assisted by the Capuchins, the local SFO and GiFra Fraternity of S. Antonio, assisted by the Conventual, and, on the last day of his visit, the Fraternity of Tercera, assisted by the Friars Minor.

Chad – National Chapter and Statutes. The National Chapter of Chad was held from 29 April to 3rd May 2009. After two days of formation themes, the report of the outgoing Council was presented, followed by the elections. These were presided over by Hervé Sylva, as delegate of the SFO General Minister, accompanied by Fr. Krisnah Ramsamy, OFM, delegate of the Conference of General Assistants. Jeannine Baleyo was elected as National Minister and International Councillor.

Canada, Quebec – Chapter. The National SFO Fraternity of Canada held its *National Election Chapter* from May 7 to 10 2009 in Chateauguay, Quebec. There was 45 capitulars plus observers. President of the Chapter was Bertha L. Richaud, SFO, accompanied by Fr. Amando Trujillo representing the Conference of General Assistants. During the Chapter, Fr. Amando had a special meeting with the Spiritual Assistants, to share experiences and to discuss matters relating to the spiritual and pastoral assistance to the SFO. *Debbie Tessier* was elected National Minister and *Garnet Moses* as International Councillor.

Ruanda – National Elective Chapter. Ruanda held its National Chapter from 14-17 May 2009, in the Franciscan parish of Kivumu. Present as delegate of the SFO General Minister was Jean Francis Isia Amundala, SFO, who also presided over the elections. Representing the Conference of General SFO Assistants was Fr. Aloys Hakizimana, OFM. Faustin Ngendahayo was elected Minister and International Councillor. .

Puerto Rico – National Elective Chapter. This was held from May 29th to 31st as scheduled, in the “Casa San José de la Porciúncula”, the National Headquarters of the SFO in Puerto Rico. The chapter took place in the town of Utuado, about 105 km from the capital San Juan), Presiding at the event was Amparo Gonzalez de Jiménez, International Councillor for Venezuela, as delegate of the General Minister, accompanied by Fr. Martín Pablo Bitzer, OFMConv, General Assistant. The Chapter was held in an atmosphere of serenity and maturity. One noteworthy feature highlighted at the Chapter was the spiritual and pastoral assistance, which the Capuchin friars have provided for many years, both locally and nationally. We were very pleased to welcome the Capuchin Provincial Minister Br Francisco Garcia, and Br. Roy Martinez, OFMCap, National SFO Assistant. The OFM Friars, also working in the Caribbean Island, share in the assistance given to some local fraternities and in some formation days organised at national level. It is hoped that a Conference of national spiritual assistants will be established in the not too distant future, to enable assistance to be given collegially. Juan Carlos Gaston Torres was elected National Minister and SFO International Councillor for Porto Rico, while Isabel Lima Perez was elected National Vice-Minister and deputy International Councillor.

Costa Rica – National Elective Chapter. The SFO Chapter of Costa Rica was held in the normal way on 30th and 31st May, in Saint Francis School. Maria Consuelo Q. de Nunez (Chelito), Presidential Councillor CISFO, presided, accompanied by Fr. Javier Ernesto Guerra, OFMConv, National SFO Assistant in Honduras, Delegate of the Conference of General Assistants. Also present were Fr. Marvin Fernandez, OFMCap, and Fr. Reto Davatz, OFMConv. The Assistants were asked to form a Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. It should be pointed out that the SFO Fraternity in Costa Rica has seven local Fraternities, with about 100 members. Representatives of six of the fraternities were present at the Chapter. Leticia Hidalgo was elected National Minister and International Councillor.

Austria – National Election Chapter. The elective Chapter of the National SFO Fraternity of Austria was held in the “Retreat House” (Haus der Stille) near Graz, in southern Austria, from June 5-7 2009. The Chapter was presided over by Tibor Kauser, presidential councillor, with Br. Samy Irudaya, OFMCap General Assistant, also present. 32 members took part. Thanks to the efficient organisation and the great help given by the National spiritual assistants: Br. Leszek Nocun, OFMCap, Fr. Wolfgang Frühwirth, OFM, and Fr. Guido Demetz, OFM, everything was conducted very fraternally and without any problems at all.

Brother Franz Weber was elected National Minister and Brother Anton Hitzl as International Councillor. The chapter underlined a number of priorities for the SFO. The new governing team took careful note of the suggestions of the participants regarding the next three years. After the elections, Br Samy Irudaya OFMCap celebrated the Eucharist and preached an inspiring homily. He also thanked the national spiritual, assistants and the other Assistants for their committed service to the SFO. At the end of the Chapter Fr. Wolfgang Frühwirth announced his resignation as National Spiritual Assistant after

many years of service. Our thanks go to Fr. Wolfgang, and may the Lord reward him for all he has done for us.

Czech Republic – National Election Chapter. In the historic town of Velehrad, from 6-8 June, the National Elective Chapter of the SFO in the Czech Republic was held. Presiding at the Chapter was Bertha Lina Richaud, International SFO Councillor for France, accompanied by Fr. Martín Bitzer, OFMConv, General Assistant. The high number of capitulars filling the room was noteworthy: 89 Secular Franciscans in all. Václav Němec was re-elected National Minister and Marie Magdalena Janáčková is the new International Councillor. Highly significant also was the presence of all the national spiritual assistants of the SFO: Fr. Bonaventure Štivar, OFMCap, Fr. Sebastian Kopeć, OFMConv, e Fr. Antonin Klanet Damobrowski, OFM. Fr. Jozef Timko, Provincial Minister OFMCap, presided at the Mass on June 7th and Fr. Bogdan Sikora, Provincial Minister OFMConv concelebrated at the Sunday Mass at which Fr. Martin presided. The new National Council was formally installed during the Mass. Special thanks are due to František Reichel, the outgoing International Councillor, for his fraternal welcome and hospitality during the days our guests spent with us.

Germany – FPV and Chapter. *The Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation* to the SFO in Germany took place on June 11-12, at the Haus Klara Retreat Centre in Würzburg. The visitators were Ewald Kreuzer, SFO, and Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, representing the Conference of General SFO Assistants. The Visitation included general and individual meetings with the National Council. The *National Election Chapter* was held on the 12th to 13th of the same month, at the same venue, with 40 capitulars plus observers. *Michaela Lutter* was confirmed in office as National Minister and the Deacon *Joachim Kessler* was elected as International Councillor. Fr. Amando also held a special meeting with the spiritual Assistants who had attended the Chapter.

El Salvador - Chapter. The National SFO Fraternity of El Salvador held its National Chapter between 19 - 21 June 2009 at the S. Pio of Pietralcina retreat house in the town of Santa Ana. As delegate of the General Minister Aida María López, of the Dominican Republic, presided over the elections. She was accompanied by Fr. José Grigoli, OFM, delegate of the Conference of General Assistants. About 60 people attended the chapter. Alberto Napoleon Zaldaña Ascencio was elected as new National Minister and International Councillor for El Salvador.

Italia, Assisi – OFM General Chapter. From 24 May to 20 June 2009 Our Lady of the Angels, Assisi, 187th General Chapter of the Friars Minor was held. 152 delegates, representing 110 jurisdictions of the Order worldwide, took part in the Chapter. The main topic was “Proclaiming the Lord’s word throughout the world”. The General Chapter re-elected Br. José Rodríguez Carballo as General Minister. The elections were presided over by the Delegate of the Holy Father, Card. José Saraiva Martins. The new Vicar General is Fr. Michael Perry originally from Indianapolis (USA). Then followed the elections of the new General Definitors. These are the names of the new Definitors and the areas they represent:

Fr. Vincent Mduduzi Zungu – Africa / Middle East
Fr. Paskalis Bruno Syukur – Asia / Oceania
Fr. Francis Walter – English-speaking region
Fr. Roger Marchal – Central Europe
Fr. Vicente-Emilio Felipe Tapia – Iberian Region
Fr. Vincenzo Brocanelli - Italy
Fr. Ernest Karol Siekierka – Slav Region
Fr. Nestor Inácio Schwerz – Latin America
Fr. Julio Cesar Bunader – Latin America

The Chapter issued a final document entitled: “Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel”. Further information can be found on official Chapter website at: <http://ofm.org/capgen09>